

USAID/Sierra Leone

Annual Report

FY 2005

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Sierra Leone

Performance:

Sierra Leone continues its steady march in its transition from war to peace. Following a gruesome decade of civil violence in which unspeakable horrors were carried out, civil society is becoming increasingly engaged in the political process while the national healing process continues. In May 2004, the country held successful District and Local Council elections - the first in over 20 years. The country has made remarkable strides toward growth and stability in light of such a violent and costly recent past. The remnants of the civil war are seen in the charred-out homes, schools and hospitals that still litter the countryside and towns, and the limbless children and adults inhabiting the cities and upcountry villages. With this backdrop, it is not surprising that Sierra Leone still holds the dubious last place of 177, the bottom of the UN Human Development Index. The population has grown from 2.9 million in 1975 to 4.8 million in 2002 (estimates for 2004 are slightly over 5 million), with a projection of 6.4 million by 2015. Almost half of the population is under 15 years of age, and urban migration has increased from 21.4% of the population to 38.1%- almost half the country's population is expected to move to the cities over the next 10 years. As the reintegration process continues, these demographic trends will be affecting program direction.

Forty-five percent of Sierra Leone's population is youth in the age bracket of 18-35 years. Even before the war, this age group was largely unskilled and unemployed, basically lacking in educational and job opportunities. Worse still, these youth were hugely disenfranchised and had little hopes of participating in decisions that affected their future. Many say that this disabling environment enticed the youth to participate in the brutal 10-year war. Paradoxically, this group is sometimes abrasively identified as the real perpetrators of the war when, in fact, they were at the same time the principal victims of its violence. Youth were sometimes forced to carry arms or serve in supportive capacities of various warring factions or face the wrath of their marauding colleagues for non-compliance. In addition, young women were forced into sexual servitude, the legacy of which local communities have yet to reconcile. As a result, the youth remain a primary concern and a potential threat to the country's long term security, especially since they lost over a decade of formal schooling. The teeming population of loitering youth in Freetown and other major urban centers that search for scarce or non-existent jobs only exacerbate an already untenable situation.

As early as 1996, the government of President Kabbah pursued the, "Local Government Reform and Decentralization Policy," whose objectives are to improve government accountability, and promote economic development, particularly at the local level. However, it was not until the 2002 Presidential election that the government was able to galvanize government support and get a commitment to embark on a decentralization program at the highest level. This commitment was matched by strong and widespread public and donor support for resuscitating the District Councils, which were abolished 20 years ago. Although successful District and Local Council elections were held in May 2004, many still believe a lot more remains to be done if these expressed good intentions and commitment are to be translated into a workable local governance program. However, many obstacles need to be overcome; including the fact that many of the councils are dominated by the ruling Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP), the positive momentum toward decentralization should be maintained.

In May 2002, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah made "Agriculture and Food Security" one of the main goals for his second term. In his address to the House of Parliament he stated that a major thrust of his government's policy is to ensure that, "No Sierra Leonean goes to bed hungry by the year 2007." The food security policy also aims at creating decent and rewarding job opportunities for young men and women in the agricultural sector to grant them a brighter and secure future. With most people having returned to their communities, which are currently peaceful, the country has a new opportunity to

galvanize its huge agricultural potential, reversing its agriculture dependency and building food security for the people of Sierra Leone. Building distribution infrastructure, from roads to public markets, is a key additional aspect of agricultural development. Attaining food security requires not only that the government and international organizations create an enabling environment for farmers to increase their production and the unemployed gain productive employment, but more importantly that youth-young men in particular (i.e., ex-combatants and victims of war)-also commit themselves to achieving this goal.

As the U.N. Peacekeeping Force (UNAMSIL) continues its rapid withdrawal, there are concerns about whether the Government of Sierra Leone and its military and police forces will be able to maintain peace and stability throughout the country. So far the police and army seem to be managing this transition effectively, though the people upcountry indicate a significantly higher level of trust for the police than the military. During the civil war, the police remained loyal to the government while the armed forces split up, with many of them joining the rebel cause and exercising violent and corrupt behavior. Therefore, today, the government and international donors are investing in rebuilding an effective police force. At the same time, the Ministry of Defense, with the help of the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) is streamlining the existing military force, significantly downsizing the "old guard," while recruiting a new, better trained and smaller elite group.

Results Framework

636-001 Reintegration of War-torn Populations in Targeted Communities Advanced

SO Level Indicator(s):

- Number of Communities Peacefully Co-existing
- Number of direct beneficiaries reached
- Number of ex-combatants and war-affected youth cooperating in civic works
- Number of ex-combatants and war-affected youth provided with reintegration skills

- 1.1** Foundations for viable communities established
- 1.2** War-torn populations in targeted communities constructively engaged
- 1.3** Public Infrastructure rehabilitated

636-002 Democratic Governance Strengthened

SO Level Indicator(s):

- Air time devoted to civic education and public information
- Number of Parliamentarians with improved constituency relations skills
- Revenues allocated to diamond producing communities from diamond funds (\$US)

- 2.1** Broadened community-based political participation
- 2.2** Participation in national dialogue facilitated
- 2.3** Broader public/private participation in improved diamond sector management
- 2.4** Increased community response to targeted human rights issues